

# THE STANLY NEWS AND PRESS

## **Parks, recreation, greenway plan adopted**

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By Tiffany Thompson, News Editor CNHI

The Stanly County Board of Commissioners, along with most of the individual municipalities throughout the county, have adopted the Stanly County Parks, Recreation and Greenway master plan.

The plan, a portion of which includes a master plan for the Carolina Thread Trail (The Thread) for Stanly County, is the outcome of an 18-month-long public process led by a local steering committee. It is an updated version of the county's original parks and recreation master plan that was adopted in 1998.

"That original plan brought about \$7 million in parks and recreation improvements around the county, but the life expectancy of such a plan is only about 10 years," Albemarle Parks and Recreation Director Toby Thorpe said. Thorpe also served as the chair for the steering committee.

Each municipality and the county itself were represented on the committee. Five community meetings were held during the planning process and a survey was both mailed to residents and posted on the county's Web site. All in all, Thorpe said there was a good response from the community, which he said indicates that the county is concerned about and interested in parks and recreation.

"We had approximately 300 responses from the nearly 4,000 (surveys) that were sent out. That was by far the largest response of any county within the Carolina Thread Trail region," Thorpe said.

The Carolina Thread Trail region is made up of 15 counties within North and South Carolina, including Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties in North Carolina and Cherokee, Chester, Lancaster and York counties in South Carolina.

The master plan provides a long-term vision for the development of trails and greenways throughout the region. Stanly County is the eighth county within the region to adopt The Thread plan.

"Adopting a countywide trails and greenway plan is an exciting step towards making The Thread a reality in Stanly County. This project gives people across the region the opportunity to get outdoors and explore many of the places that make Stanly County and the surrounding areas unique," Thorpe said.

The Thread plan, when completed, will provide more than 109 miles of trails and greenways throughout the county, connecting such destinations as the Stanly County Farmers Market, Badin Inn Golf Resort and Club, Badin Lake, all major parks in the county, Morrow Mountain State Park, Pfeiffer University, Stanly Community College, Uwharrie National Forest, Stanly County wineries and many other locations.

Though the Stanly County Parks, Recreation and Greenway master plan does include The Thread plan as a component, the master plan also provides a comprehensive look at parks around the county and what needs to be added or updated.

Also included in the plan were results from the surveys, which indicated the top-10 areas of importance to residents of the county in regards to parks and recreations are:

1. Natural areas
2. Walking trails

3. Picnic shelters
4. Playgrounds
5. Special events and festivals
6. Youth activities
7. Festivals for arts and crafts
8. Passive recreation opportunities
9. Signed bicycle walking routes
10. Surveillance in the parks

Enhancing and improving existing parks was considered a top priority by citizens and stakeholders who participated in the plan process.

The following site maintenance and enhancement recommendations apply generally and could be considered a baseline for upgrades to existing parks:

- Upgrade and standardize site furnishings: trash receptacles, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, bike racks, etc.
- Provide sidewalks and crosswalks striping at key access points into parks, especially along major roadways.
- Repair and/or replace cracked and uneven pavement along accessible routes within parks.
- Add ADA-compliant detectable warning surfaces where accessible routes cross traffic areas.
- Replace non-accessible and non-ADA compliant drinking fountains with compliant ones.
- Ensure that all required park signs are visible and installed according to code (height).
- Install rules and regulations signs at park entrances and make sure they are visible to pedestrians.
- Install lights along main pathways through parks for safety. Consider solar powered or LED lights for cost and energy efficiency.
- Conduct safety inspection of the play equipment and surfacing; and
- Provide shade trees and/or shade structures around playgrounds for summer use.

Also included in the plan are more detailed improvements for individual parks within each community. Copies of the master plan and Carolina Thread Trail plan are available for viewing at the Albemarle Parks and Recreation Office in Rock Creek Park.

If all improvements and ideas included in the plan were to be completed over the next 10-year period, the total capital outlay for the plan is estimated to be \$78,954,749.

But with the passing of both the master plan and the Carolina Thread Trail plan, the county would not only be eligible but would also have an advantage for grant funding from various sources such as the Carolina Thread Trail and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

<http://thesnaponline.com/local/x955429045/Parks-recreation-greenway-plan-adopted>